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UNDER

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## Big Cypress Lodge

**NEW PROPERTY** Alligators, trout and bears, oh my! Association planners—particularly for groups with an interest in the outdoors—have a new venue for events in Memphis, Tennessee, with the opening of Big Cypress Lodge. The wilderness-inspired hotel has 105 rustically appointed rooms, including eight suites, and is located within the Memphis Pyramid, now a Bass Pro Shop. It's a sister resort to Big Cedar Lodge in the Ozarks near Ridgedale, Missouri.

The 25-story Pyramid originally opened in the early '90s as a concert venue and served as home to the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies. After sitting vacant for several years, it was renovated and converted into retail and hotel space. A popular spot for tourists, the Pyramid is also a strong player for meetings, with seven different spaces available on the Lodge's third floor. Combined, Waterfowl Gallery and Ducks Unlimited Gallery can accommodate up to 350 attendees at one time and open to the Mississippi Terrace, which holds 500.

Playing to the adventurous spirit of many outdoorsmen and women the area attracts, the Pyramid has plenty of active entertainment options, from pistol and archery ranges to an underwater-themed bowling alley to an indoor swamp with 100-ft. trees, real alligators and 36 kinds of fish.

Two dining options are on-site. At the top of the Pyramid (get there by taking the world's tallest freestanding, four-sided elevator) is the aptly named The Lookout at the Pyramid, which has 360-degree views of the city, steampunk decor, a Southern-inspired menu, and many regional bourbons and whiskeys. "That spot is a huge hit," says Lana McDonald, hotel manager, noting several groups have already booked the restaurant for events.

The more casual Uncle Buck's Fishbowl & Grill has a family-friendly atmosphere with an island-themed bar in the shape of a boat, complete with an aquarium full of fish. For groups wanting to try their hand at angling rather than ogling, the hotel can help arrange guided fishing tours as well as hunting trips and other excursions, depending on a group's needs. "We always incorporate what we are: outdoor enthusiasts," says McDonald.

—Kelsey Ogletree

### Insider Tip

Welcome attendees with a room drop of fresh fudge from the Fudge Shop in the Pyramid, which makes up to 300 different varieties of the sweet treat.